

From
Ezra Brainerd, Jr.,
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Confidential

May 14, 1914

My dear son:

"Much of my time this spring has been given to inducing my class-mate Gov. Mead to give \$60,000 for a new College Chapel. He is to announce the gift at a college meeting tomorrow evening. I wish you could be here: but no one here knows it yet but President Thomas and the architect and you won't get the news until after public announcement is made, and it may reach you by press telegrams before this letter. It will make my old college friends see that the old Prex is not dead yet! "

March 10, 1915

"About Feb. 12 I had a vicious attack of my old catarrhal cold, which about used me up. While prostrated with this I was called upon to give a funeral discourse in the church on Joseph Battelle. This I got along with better than I expected to, seeing I had only a day's notice. The Saturday following (Feb. 27) I had to spend a day at Rutland, getting Dr. Mead to provide for certain extra expenses for the "Mead Chapel". I got \$1031.00 more as the result of my efforts, though Thomas thought I could hardly do it. J. Battell's will is to be "probated" the 22nd. It looks as though the College was going to get something"

May 23, 1915

"Joe Battelle's will leaves most of his property to the College. But except the codicils it dates back to the time when I was President and tried to sow generous purposes in the minds of men of means".

Nov. 14, 1918

"The papers this morning announce the bequest of \$100,000 from Mrs. Russell Sage. I labored for several years to interest her in this matter. She was the President of the Emma Willard Association in New York City, and twice I went down and read papers in her house on Emma Willard's indebtedness to our College for her advanced views on Women's education. You remember she lived in the Lindsley house (of brick) on South Main St. I hope my part in this matter may be recognized."

Oct. 11, 1919

"I am most preoccupied just now in an effort to get my old friend and class-mate, Dr. John A. Mead of Rutland to make a big donation to the college. He is a millionaire nearly 79 years old and is inclined to place his money where it will do most good. If I could induce him to give one or two hundred thousand for the college it would be fine all around, would'nt it?"

Jan. 22, 1920

"Spring will soon be here, the days are plainly growing longer. I have kept well so far, though the recent deaths of Prof. Kellogg and of my most intimate friend Dr. Mead are quite depressing."

April 1, 1920

"I married Fannie Rockwell Dec. 1, 1868, having graduated from Andover Theo. Seminary and been elected Prof. of English Literature at Middlebury the previous summer. We boarded at Springside till April 1871, paying \$13.75 a week for Fannie and Myself. In April 1871 I had a chance to move over to the Nichol's house on Weybridge St. Prof. Albee's wife had died and I bought out his furniture for 819 dollars and kept house there two years, having him and his son Ernest to board. I kept most careful account of all expenses and found the cost for Fannie, myself and Bessie the first year only \$7.62 a week including \$200 annual rent.

Any U.S. Historyw will tell you that from 1873 to 1878 was a period of the worst financial distress the country up to that time had ever known. The college could pay but a fraction of my salary(\$1500 a year). On July 1, 1878 the sum held back amounted to \$3376.70 I found considerable relief from the money I could earn by preaching which my cash-book shows was \$210 for the first six months of 1873. Fannie's mother managed to help me in one way or another, and it is amusing to see from my record the various devices by which we managed to pull through."

May 2, 1920

"Your letter of April 25, has done me a world of good. I had gotten much depressed in looking up at the Town Clerk's office the sad history of the events from 1873-78. I send these papers for you to peruse and keep nos. 1-5. I have been trying the last few days to look on the brighter side of my past life and to think that while my financial career has been a bad failure, I can believe that I have done certain things for which the world will remember me viz. (1) built up the college as teacher and President, securing three valuable buildings and about half a million dollars in endowment, (2) accomplished valuable results by extended researches in botany and geology, (3) solved important problems in surveying in Hancock, Ripton, and Middlebury and in map making and history of land titles. Hardly a day passes but I get a call or letter asking for help in one or more of these departments. I am the recognized authority in the U.S. in regard to violets. So I might go on bragging, but you will pardon me provided I stop right here, won't you?"

Edith must be mistaken in thinking that we met in Florida in 1915. Joe Battell died Feb. 23, 1915 and if we saw him walking in the narrow streets of St. Augustine in March of that year it must have been his ghost! I have other evidence from a plant that I collected March 20 at Deland Junction (where we saw an old fashioned locomotive that burned wood) that our trip was in March 1914. What delightful memories I have of trips with you, in 1908 when I left you at McAlester to go east to Washington and in 1910 when we went to Westville, Okla. But, alas, these joys are past forever."

April 4, 1922

"Are planning for a grand Commencement June 11-14. On Tuesday the new President will be inaugurated and many of the New England College Presidents are expected. I think my two surviving classmates -- Batchelder and Hemenway will also be there. There were in all 27 of us in the class of '64 but only 11 of us graduated, the remaining 16 most of them, served in the civil war. I was the youngest man in the class, only 16 years and three months old when the war broke out, and though I drilled with the rest I was rejected as too young. Hemenway and Batchelder are both of them 3 years and 8

months
mos. older than I, and "Hem." had served 12[^] in the army before he dropped back into our class in 1863."

Feb. 13, 1923

"I have been unusually busy writing up various historical and biographical papers regarding the teachers and benefactors of the college. You know that as student or teacher I have been connected with the college since 1860 for 60 years if you take out the two years I spent in Andover Theo. Seminary. Hardly a day passes but somebody writes or calls for information regarding the days of "Old Langsyne". People seem determined since my health has improved to get out of me all my recollections of my early life in the past."